

FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE

En Clair

FOREIGN OFFICE AND
WHITEHALL DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Arthur

VZ 1016/94

No. 942
September 29, 1961D. 6.49 p.m. September 29, 1961
R. 7.44 p.m. September 29, 1961IMMEDIATEAddressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 942 of September 29.

Repeated for information to Beirut

Baghdad

Amman

PONEC (Cyprus)

Ankara

and Saving to Washington

My telegram No. 940. VZ 1016/71

Nasser has just addressed a mass rally of National Union in Gumburiya Square. Following is rough summary of his speech.

2. Nasser said that a very small force began the movement in Syria, but the treachery had spread. At first the people of Damascus and other towns had shown that they were not afraid of the mutineers: they had demonstrated publicly in favour of the Union. Up till midnight last night the people of Aleppo and Latakia in particular had shown the true feelings of the Syrian nation.

3. Latakia had requested forces from Egypt and he had decided to send two divisions and naval forces. The forces, including 2,000 paratroopers, had set out yesterday. But Aleppo and Latakia had later joined the rebels. It was unthinkable that Arab should fight Arab. So just before midnight he had ordered the forces to return. Meanwhile 120 paratroopers had landed in Latakia and he had ordered these to surrender to the local commander. He had countermanded all military operations.

4. Now was the time to hold fast to Arab nationalism. It had survived previous acts of treachery (references to King Abdullah and Nuri Said). The Syrians had sought the Union, and he had warned them that it would be difficult. But they had insisted unanimously and he had accepted the responsibility. He had had many difficulties with Syria since then, but he had no regrets.

/Arabism

FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE V

En Clair

FOREIGN OFFICE AND
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Mr. Arthur

VG 1016/94

No. 912
September 29, 1961

D. 6.49 p.m. September 29, 1961
R. 7.44 p.m. September 29, 1961

IMMEDIATE

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 912 of September 29.
Repeated for information to Beirut Baghdad
Amman PONEG (Cyprus)
Ankara
and Savign to Washington

My telegram No. 910. VG 1016/11

Nasser has just addressed a mass rally of National Union in Gnahuriya Square. Following is rough summary of his speech.

2. Nasser said that a very small force began the movement in Syria, but the treachery had spread. At first the people of Damascus and other towns had shown that they were not afraid of the mutineers: they had demonstrated publicly in favour of the Union. Up till midnight last night the people of Aleppo and Latakia in particular had shown the true feelings of the Syrian nation.
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4. Now was the time to hold fast to Arab nationalism. It had survived previous acts of treachery (references to King Abdullah and Nuri Said). The Syrians had sought the Union, and he had warned them that it would be difficult. But they had insisted unanimously and he had accepted the responsibility. He had had many difficulties with Syria since then, but he had no regrets.

/Arabism

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Cairo telegram No. 942 to Foreign Office.

Arabism could not be denied, and the UAR must remain the basis of Arab unity. At Port Said great Powers had failed to break the nation's will, but the reactionaries and Imperialist agents had gone further in Syria. King Hussein had recognised the rebel Government.

5. He must now ask heavy sacrifices and he knew they would be made. Unity was the national will, but it could not be maintained through military operations. He had faith in the Syrian people: they would not abandon their aims of the past few years nor would they give up their social achievements (at this point Nasser spoke at some length about socialist legislation etc). Reactionary, Imperialist circles had taken the opportunity to enslave the Syrian people to capitalist exploitation and reaction. But they would raise their voice again and cast out Imperialism, reaction etc.

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- Sir H. Stephenson
- Mr. Marett
- Head of Eastern Department
- Head of N.E.A.D.
- Head of News Department
- Resident Clerk

SECRET**FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE**

Cypher/OTP

**FOREIGN OFFICE (SECRET) AND
WHITSHALL (SECRET) DISTRIBUTION**

Mr. Arthur

No. 946
September 30, 1961D. 12.07 p.m. September 30, 1961
R. 12.24 p.m. September 30, 1961**IMMEDIATE**
SECRET**Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 946 of September 30.**
Repeated for information to Beirut

Amman

PONEC (Cyprus)

and Saving to Damascus.

My telegram No. 943: Syrian Coup.

The Jordanian Chargé d'Affaires came to see me this morning. In spite of Jordanian recognition of the new Syrian Government he has not yet been summoned by the Egyptians.

2. He said that three Syrian officers visited him last night. They told him that Nasser was intending shortly to send small groups of paratroops to Syria to carry out sabotage. In order to avoid the Latakia air defences the aircraft carrying these troops would fly over Saudi Arabia and Eastern Jordan.

3. The Chargé d'Affaires thinks that his sources are reliable and has reported the story to Amman.

Foreign Office pass PONEC (Cyprus) as my telegram No. 102.

[Repeated as requested]

ADVANCE COPIES:Lord Privy Seal
Sir H. Stephenson
Mr. Marett
Head of Eastern Department
Head of N.E.A.D.
Head of News Department
Resident Clerk**SECRET**

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FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE

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2 OCT 1961
 ✓ 10/6/97

En Clair

Mr. Arthur

No. 948
September 30, 1961

D. 12.24 p.m. September 30, 1961
R. 1.44 p.m. September 30, 1961

PRIORITY

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 948 of
September 30.

Repeated for information Saving to Beirut Damascus
Amman PONEC (Cyprus)
Baghdad Washington

My telegram No. 943. ✓ 10/6/75

Today's Press is almost entirely devoted to accounts of President Nasser's speech of yesterday.

2. The main emphasis is on Nasser's statesmanlike refusal to allow the union to be maintained at the cost of a military operation and the shedding of Arab blood, and on his appeal to the nation to rise above its feelings of bitterness. The Press also develops his theme that the new Syrian régime is dominated by a clique of monopolists hostile to recent socialist reforms in Syria who exploited their connexions with certain army officers to carry out the conspiracy.

3. The fact that there is no immediate proof of imperialist involvement is not allowed as exoneration of the imperialists. The prompt recognition of the régime by King Hussein, the Turkish Government and the Shah is adduced as strong confirmation. One paper notes that the BBC was the first to "show enthusiasm" for the rising and there are references to impending moves by the United States Sixth Fleet.

4. The general conclusion is that this is only a temporary set back and that the will of the Syrian people must inevitably triumph.

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Mr. Arthur

No. 960
October 1, 1961UG:076/105D. 7.42 p.m. October 1, 1961
R. 7.56 p.m. October 1, 1961IMMEDIATE
CONFIDENTIALAddressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 960 of October 1.Repeated for information to Amman, Damascus
Beirut Washington
PONEC (Cyprus)

Your telegram No. 1415: Syria. - 10/1/61

Nasser himself ruled out the use of force in the speech summarized in my telegram No. 942. He cannot, in any case, mount a military operation against Syria so long as the Damascus Government enjoys popular support and controls the Latakia area. But if the Syrian Army should split, he might try to support the dissident faction from the air.

2. At the same time Nasser has repeatedly insisted that he will not bargain with the rebels. He threw away his only chance of a compromise with them in the early stages of the coup. I do not think he will make further attempts to treat with the present Syrian Government; but he might be prepared, and even relieved, to negotiate some agreement with its successor if he could do so without further loss of face.

3. Beyond this it is difficult to predict what Nasser will do. The general opinion here is that he does not know himself. Past experience suggests that he will react vigorously, and perhaps irrelevantly, to so great a blow to his prestige. Persons on the fringe of the UAR regime certainly expect stirring events in the next few days. They talk of a counter-coup in Damascus and of the prospect of violence in Amman. I should expect Nasser to do his utmost to upset the present Government in Damascus, irrespective of what happens afterwards, and to try to subvert part of the Syrian Army. I think King Hussein and the Jordan Government will also be

/targets

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Cairo telegram No. 960 to Foreign Office.

-2-

targets of Egyptian subversion. Further action would depend on the success of these efforts, which in turn depend on whether the Egyptian intelligence network in Syria has been able to survive the recent coup.

4. The loss of Syria is not likely in itself to affect Nasser's grip on Egypt. There is little doubt that ordinary Egyptians are relieved to be free of the troublesome province in the north: they are saying openly that it was a drain on Egyptian wealth. There is thus no popular pressure on Nasser to take action. The Egyptians will accept him as the ruler of Egypt. But it is doubtful whether Nasser himself and his regime (including the Army and the Arab nationalists) can accept that position. They have come to expect greater things and may try to turn defeat into victory, as they have done before.

5. In the last resort, all will depend on the changing moods of Nasser himself and his few close advisers. I think he believes sincerely that the Syrian people want him and will come back to him if he waits. In that mood he could sit back and pretend that nothing had happened - "holding fast to Arab nationalism", as he calls it. He would not endanger his position in Egypt, at any rate in the short term, by such tactics; and his speech on September 29 (my telegram No. 942) seemed to indicate that his mind was working that way at that time. But wounded pride cannot be expected to breed patience in men like Nasser and his colleagues, and I believe they are more likely to take reckless action if an opportunity presents itself. And such action will not necessarily be limited to Syria.

6. I have discussed these questions with the United States Ambassador and members of his staff, but the conclusions are my own. I will telegraph further if the situation and the mood of Cairo seems to change.

Foreign Office please pass immediate PONEC (Cyprus) priority Washington and routine Damascus as my telegrams Nos. 109, 53 and 40 respectively.

[Repeated as requested]

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FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE

RECEIVED IN
2 OCT 1961
15106/106

Cypher/OTP

DEPARTMENTAL
DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Arthur

No. 961
October 1, 1961

D. 8.14 p.m. October 1, 1961
R. 8.37 p.m. October 1, 1961



IMMEDIATE
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Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 961 of October 1.
Repeated for information to Washington Damascus
 Amman

Your telegram No. 143 and my immediately preceding telegram:
Recognition of Syrian Government.

The attitude of the Cairo Government at present, seems to be that the U.A.R. remains in being (my telegram No. 955) and that countries which recognize the Damascus authorities cannot be represented in Cairo (my telegram No. 956). It is, however, not yet possible to say whether or how long this position is likely to be held. I doubt whether we shall get an explicit statement of the Cairo attitude on this question: it would be characteristic of Nasser to wait for others to act rather than to enunciate his own version of the Hallstein Doctrine.

2. Ideally we should wait until the large majority of Arab States (your telegram No. 1047 to Amman) have recognized the Damascus Government. If the Arabs temporise too long, I hope that we shall be able to wait for some prominent un-committed country such as India. It will, in any event, be essential for us not to act before the Americans; and we should if possible carry other Western Powers, and particularly the Germans, with us.

3. Today's Press comment (my telegram No. 959) suggests that we are being chosen as the villains of the piece; and if we appear to be hastening towards recognition of the Damascus Government I fear that we shall be in serious trouble here. Nasser is in the mood to break off relations with us if we actually accord recognition soon and are ahead both of the Americans and of the other countries classified in paragraph 2 above.

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15106/106

15106/106

14.

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Cairo telegram No. 961 to Foreign Office

- 2 -

4. I hope, therefore, that we shall wait as long as possible and keep fully in step with the Americans and others. I hope also that any recognition will be "de facto" at first. If and when the Cairo Government become resigned to the fact that other countries are recognising Syria, they will still see a difference between "de facto" and "de jure".

5. I should be grateful for as long a warning as possible of any move towards recognition.

Foreign Office please pass Immediate Damascus and Priority Washington as my telegrams Nos. 41 and 54 respectively.

[Repeated as requested]

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Ref: FO 371/158789

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FROM DAMASCUS TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Cypher/OTP

FOREIGN OFFICE AND WHITEHALL

Her Majesty's Consul-General

DISTRIBUTION

No. 81

D. 10.50 a.m. September 30, 1961

September 30, 1961

R. 10.15 a.m. September 30, 1961

IMMEDIATE

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Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 81 of September 30

Repeated for information to: Cairo
Amman
Beirut

Baghdad
Tel Aviv

2 OCT 1961

My immediately preceding telegram.

V51016/

V61016/108

The Syrian coup d'état started at 04.30 hours on September 28. The focus of the attack was the house of Field Marshal Amr. There was firing there and some casualties. Since then there has been no shooting in Damascus. There has been a curfew on the nights of September 28 and September 29 and there are tanks at strategic points in the streets, but by day business premises are opening as usual. There have so far been no anti-foreign manifestations and only some foreigners in transit have suffered some inconvenience owing to the temporary closing of the frontiers.

2. The new administration seems to be composed mostly of experienced officials with technical qualifications for their jobs. The leaders of the revolt have remained anonymous in Syria, though they have been named by President Nasser.

3. There has been no evidence so far to connect Colonel Sarraj with the revolt, and it is not known whether he is at liberty or not.

Foreign Office pass Immediate Cairo No. 32, Amman No. 5, Beirut No. 9, Baghdad No. 9, Tel Aviv No. 5.

[Repeated as requested].

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Sir H. Stephenson

Mr. Marett

Head of Eastern Department

Head of N.E.A.D.

Head of Consular Department

Head of News Department

CONFIDENTIALFROM TEL AVIV TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Cypher/OTP

FOREIGN OFFICE AND WHITEHALL
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Mr. Hancock

No. 335

September 29, 1961 *VE 1010/116*

D. 3.33 p.m. September 29, 1961

R. 4.48 p.m. September 29, 1961

IMMEDIATECONFIDENTIALAddressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 335 of
September 29.

Repeated for information to:

Washington

Baghdad

Amman

Beirut

Cairo

COMEC (Aden)

and Saving to:

Tehran

Kuwait

Bahrain

UKMIS New York

My immediately preceding telegram: Syria. - *US/1010/116*

I saw the Acting Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning. He asked me to convey to Her Majesty's Government an assurance similar to that given to my American colleague. I said that I knew Her Majesty's Government would be glad to receive this assurance.

2. Levavi said that, according to the Israeli Government's estimate of the situation, the insurgent leaders in Syria consisted of a junta of soldiers assisted by civilian technicians. The Israeli Government have no evidence of prior involvement by neighbouring or other countries. Nor have they any evidence of connexion between insurgents and Serraj. If the insurgents succeeded in establishing themselves the Israeli Government thought they would immediately be faced by severe economic problems. They would then, the Israelis thought, be inclined to accept money from anyone who was prepared to supply it.

3. Levavi said that he thought Nasser had probably made a mistake yesterday in rejecting the possibility of compromise and disowning Amer. It looked as if hope of patching up a settlement was now lost.

4. I said that loss of Syria and consequent dissolution of the U.A.R. would be so great a blow to Nasser that he would presumably

/go

CONFIDENTIAL

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Tel Aviv telegram No. 335 to Foreign Office

- 2 -

go to any lengths to re-establish the position. Levavi agreed, but said that the Israeli military estimate was that if, as was now reported, the insurgents controlled Aleppo and Lattakia possibilities of military counter-action were limited. He said that although there were a number of Egyptian officers in Syria there were no significant Egyptian military units.

5. I spent last night in a Jewish settlement which marches with Syria, the border being the Jordan river. The Israelis there had observed that the Syrians had put up Syrian flags as opposed to U.A.R. flags. Mr. Ben Gurion was also there. It is unlikely he would have visited this remote spot if the Israeli Government had been up to anything. He is on holiday and said that he intended to remain so.

6. My immediately following telegram contains the gist of what Service Attachés have been told by the Deputy Chief of Military Intelligence.

Foreign Office please pass Immediate to Washington No. 14 and Amman No. 32, Priority to Cairo No. 24, Baghdad No. 9, Beirut No. 28, POMEC (Aden) Misc No. 22 and Saving to Tehran Misc No. 7, Bahrain Misc No. 8, Kuwait Misc No. 9, UKMIS New York No. 41.

[Repeated as requested.]

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- Sir H. Stephenson
- Mr. Marett
- Head of Eastern Department
- Head of N.E.A.D.
- Head of News Department

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Handwritten: 121016/117

SYRIA

The Israeli Counsellor called on me this morning. He had some time before proposed to call then by way of a courtesy visit; but in the event we only talked about Syria. I spoke to Mr. Evron on the lines now being used by News Department. He, for his part, was of course unable to conceal a good deal of satisfaction at the way things had gone, though he said that the Israeli Government's instructions to their Missions were to the effect that they should not express views one way or the other and wait on events.

2. Mr. Evron said that he had seen a few telegrams ~~about~~ this morning, which did not add very much to what was in the newspapers. The Israeli Government believed that the leaders of the revolt came mainly from the Right Wing, together with certain Baathists. The Right Wing leaders of the revolt were themselves favourable to the general idea of Syrian union with Iraq rather than with the U.A.R. But they were not in any way pro-Kassem and if the revolt came off it was likely that the new leaders would concentrate on re-establishing Syrian independent identity.

3. Mr. Evron said that his information was that the revolt had now spread to the whole of Syria. It was difficult to see what Nasser could now do; he had no land access to Syria. The Israelis had noticed a considerable number of air incursions over Israeli airspace from the South, both yesterday afternoon and last night. He thought that these U.A.R. aircraft were probably checking up as to whether any Israeli troop movements were taking place, though they might of course have been intending to fly to Syria and ~~then~~ gave up ~~the~~ when Israeli fighters took off to meet them.

Handwritten signature: R. S. Scrivener

(R. S. Scrivener)
September 29, 1961

Copy to: Eastern Department

Handwritten: John Burt
Sept. 29
dl
29/9.

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FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

RECEIVED
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3 OCT 1961
VG 1016

September 29, 1961

.....

to Amman

You will have seen from our telegram No.398 Guidance of yesterday that we are playing Syria pretty cautiously. I now enclose a copy of our telegram No.1047 which was put out today to the Arab posts concerned to give them guidance about the question of recognising the new regime, and to point out that we should be most careful not to give any impression that we are pleased with what has happened in Syria (the reverse is in fact the case).

2. My purpose in writing now is first to enquire how the French are reacting to the Syrian revolution and, secondly, to ask you to encourage them to damp down any manifestation of pleasure at Nasser's discomfiture in the press and radio. We and the Americans are trying to take action in a similar sense. It seems clear enough that the revolution was inspired only from within Syria and there is therefore some hope that Egypt will not easily be able to blame us for it convincingly. But if the Western press and radio start gloating it is bound to make our position worse by goading the Voice of the Arabs into attacking us.

.....

3. I also attach copies of other telegrams which may be of interest to you.

(G. F. Hiller)

R. M. Hadow Esq.,
British Embassy,
Paris.

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RECEIVED IN
2 OCT 1961
VQ1016/119

I spoke to the U.A.R. Ambassador this morning and told him that we naturally viewed the situation in Syria with some concern. I also told him what the position was about our communications (or rather lack of them) with Damascus.

2. Mr. El Kony said that he for his part viewed the situation not only with concern but with regret, the implication being that he had seen no sign of regret in the British press. He then went on to say that he had not been at all pleased with what he had read so far. I asked him to what he was referring and he said, "Well, the Daily Telegraph, for instance", (he is much too sophisticated to cite the Daily Express in evidence against us). I said that I would read the Daily Telegraph articles which I had not seen but he could be sure that, if he saw anything which was unkind, it would not be of official inspiration - quite the contrary.

3. It is in fact unfortunate that the papers which might have produced some balanced comment, e.g. The Times and the Guardian, have nothing this morning.

RS ROGER STEVENS

September 29, 1961

RS
Mr. Crawford
Mr. Booth
Mr. Hillier *9/29*
News Department

Copied to: Sir F. Hoyer Millar
Mr. Wiggin.

There has since been a considerable amount of balanced comment.

L. H. ... 10

h. ... 10

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FROM TEL AVIV TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Cypher/OTP

FOREIGN OFFICE AND
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Mr. Hancock

No. 336

VG 1016/120

September 29, 1961

D: 5.00 p.m. September 29, 1961

R: 5.33 p.m. September 29, 1961

IMMEDIATE
CONFIDENTIAL

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 336 of September 29
Repeated for information to:

Washington	Admiralty	Baghdad
Amman	Air Ministry	Beirut
War Office	Cairo	POMEK

and Saving to:

Tehran	Kuwait
Bahrain	U.K. Mission New York

My immediately preceding telegram: Syria. — VG 1016/116.

Israeli Deputy Director of Military Intelligence gave as reasons for the growing Syrian dissatisfaction the drastic steps Nasser has taken in Syria during the last few months to consolidate the regime and achieve positive economic and political results. His advisers were against this but he decided to pursue his own line. The Israelis estimated ten days ago that if Syrian dissatisfaction were translated into action even a small military group would be able to bring about a coup d'état as the Egyptians were not in full control of units. In fact the Syrians were in command of all units, usually with Egyptians as the second in command. No particular group was pin-pointed. Summary of events is that a small group of officers mainly belonging to H.Q. First Army with the aid of a few armoured cars and tanks seized control of several important buildings after which in a matter of hours they had the entire country under control. Amer plus some Syrian Ministers loyal to the Egyptians were in Damascus at the time and were kept under surveillance. Apparently no shots were fired. At midday

/September

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CONFIDENTIALTel Aviv telegram No. 336 to Foreign Office

- 2 -

September 28 it was reported that there had been consultations between the rebel army officers and Amer and it was said that agreement had been reached. It then appears that the rebel officers, representatives of the U.A.R. in Damascus and Nasser in Cairo became out of step and Amer left for Egypt. Shortly after this Amer made a statement that no agreement had been reached in Damascus and this was followed by Nasser's offensive broadcast in the early evening during which he claimed that Amer had agreed only under duress. When the intentions of Nasser to carry through a strong anti-rebel programme became clear the attitude of the Syrian rebels hardened. It had been clear that the rebels had a majority of armed forces behind them by noon on the 28th. Aleppo and Latakia remained uncertain but Aleppo soon came over to the rebels. Latakia remained on the fence until the Egyptian paratroop landing early today when the Syrians are reported to have slaughtered the whole invading force. Rebel control is now complete. Nothing is known of the minor Egyptian naval units which were thought to be in Latakia.

2. No common political denominator in the Council of Officers has been noted but it is considered that Mr. Kusbari's Right-wing background sets the form.

3. The Israelis do not think Egypt intends or indeed can take any military action against Syria at present. A steady stream of aircraft is evacuating Egyptians from Syria to Egypt. No change in the Syrian frontier units have been noted. The Israelis do not think there is any connexion between intrusion over Israel of U.A.R. aircraft early Wednesday night and the Revolution.

4. The Israelis state that they are taking no unusual military action as a result of the Revolution.

Foreign Office pass Immediate Washington 15, Amman 33, War Office unnumbered, Admiralty unnumbered, Air Ministry unnumbered; Priority Cairo 10, Baghdad 29, Beirut 29, POMEAC (Aden) Misc 23; Saving to Tehran Misc 10, Bahrain Misc 11, Kuwait Misc. 12, U.K. Mission New York 42.

[Repeated as requested. Copies sent to War Office, Air Ministry and Admiralty]

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